



BUREAU OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

EMS Information Bulletin 2024-07

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SUBJECT: Change of Format for EMS Practical Examinations

TO: PA EMS Regional Educational Coordinators
PA Regional EMS Directors
PA EMS Educational Institutes
PA EMS Instructors
PA EMS Providers

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Martin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

As many of you know, effective July 1, 2024, the National Registry of EMTs (NREMT) is sunsetting their ALS practical examinations that tests a candidate for certification after the candidate has completed their initial provider education. According to a statement from the NREMT, “The National Registry is discontinuing the ALS Psychomotor Examination because there have been advancements in testing practices and testing science, and there has been a consistent, resonant call for modernization and efficiency by stakeholders across the industry.” This advancement has allowed the NREMT to incorporate what it refers to as a Performance Component to its cognitive (written) examination.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (Department), Bureau of Emergency Medical Services (BEMS), in accordance with the Pennsylvania EMS System Act of 2009 (Act) must ensure that a person who intends to secure EMS provider certification successfully completes the required certification examinations within a specified period of time (35 Pa.C.S. § 8113(e)). The Act sets forth the requirements necessary for each EMS provider applicant to obtain certification in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Act specifies that an applicant for EMS provider certification must:

1. Successfully complete the respective EMS training courses approved by the Department.
2. Pass a practical skills examination approved by the Department, which is administered after applicants have completed the respective EMS training courses.
3. Pass a written certification exam approved by the Department, which is administered after applicants have completed the respective EMS training courses.

Pennsylvania, like many other states that currently utilize the NREMT practical skills examination for AEMT and Paramedic, will be transitioning to the Student Minimum Competency (SMC) format for the practical examination and will follow the testing process as set forth by the NREMT. Therefore, Pennsylvania has adopted the suggested SMCs from the Committee on Accreditation of

Education Programs for the Emergency Medical Services Profession (CoAEMSP) for Paramedic and the National Association of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO) for AEMT.

EMS Educational programs offered in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania shall meet the following:

1. EMR, EMT, AEMT, and Paramedic courses will meet the 2021 National EMS Education Standards.
2. EMR, EMT, AEMT, and Paramedic courses will assure the skills taught meet the most current version of the National EMS Scope of Practice (2019 and amended 2021), and augment with the skills expected of each provider in the most recent Pennsylvania EMS Scope of Practice as published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin.
3. The Department-established SMCs are those suggested from CoAEMSP for Paramedic and NASEMSO for AEMT. Educational institutes must demonstrate that the Educational Institute's Advisory Committee has approved, and students have met, at a minimum, the SMCs from these two organizations.

The following describes the approved EMS Practical Exam from the Department:

1. Effective January 1, 2025, EMR, EMT, PHRN, PHPE, and PHP practical exam will be a scenario and skills-based examination identified by BEMS and conducted by the Regional EMS Councils within the Commonwealth. This exam will be known as the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania 2025 EMS Psychomotor Exam.
 - a. This exam will also serve as the Psychomotor Exam for all levels who require a Pennsylvania psychomotor examination for Pennsylvania certification reinstatement.
 - b. Those who have a psychomotor examination requirement for reinstatement at the AEMT or Paramedic level between July 1, 2024, and December 31, 2024, will utilize the current BLS psychomotor exam to meet the Pennsylvania psychomotor examination for Pennsylvania certification reinstatement.
2. Effective no later than July 1, 2024, the Pennsylvania AEMT practical skills examination will become the portfolio process/SMCs adopted by the NREMT that tracks a candidate's successful completion of the SMCs established by the Department and the educational institute.
 - a. For this portfolio process, the student documents each attempt made to master a certain skill during their educational program; the portfolio will record both successful and unsuccessful attempts.
 - b. During an AEMT educational program, if a student has progressed and is meeting the AEMT SMCs, and leaves the program voluntarily, the recorded data shall count toward meeting the AEMT SMCs and will be valid for 24 months. Allowing 24 months assures compliance with the Act's requirement that a candidate must attempt the cognitive and practical skills examination within one year of completing their educational program and pass both examinations within two years of completion of the educational program.

course. This final evaluation is a part of meeting the SMC. Participants who do not successfully pass the summative comprehensive psychomotor final evaluation after three (3) attempts will receive remediation from the educational institute before the student can make any additional attempts. If the student is not successful after six (6) total attempts at the summative comprehensive psychomotor final evaluation, he or she will be required to retake the Paramedic educational program. The SMCs documented during the initial educational program will no longer be valid and cannot be counted towards the SMCs required during the next educational program.

- iii. In accordance with CoAEMSP, Educational institutes are expected to assure a capstone phase to their program. This is the final phase of the educational program that evaluates a student's ability to be the lead on an emergency call.
 - c. EMS Educational institutes shall provide evidence of all student compliance during the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and other required program accreditation processes.
4. Effective January 1, 2026, the Department will establish SMCs for the EMR and EMT levels, and will establish Minimum Competencies for licensed professions, i.e., PHRNs, PHPEs, and PHPs.
- a. BEMS will establish a transition from a formal practical exam to the SMCs for EMR, EMT and Minimum Competencies for PHRN, PHPE, and PHP.
 - b. BEMS will establish criteria for those who require a Pennsylvania psychomotor skill for Pennsylvania certification reinstatement.

The Department will continue to utilize the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technician's (NREMT) cognitive examination, via computer exam, as the written certification examination for all EMS provider levels within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania at their respective levels. This includes, Emergency Medical Responder (EMR), Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), Advanced Emergency Medical Technician (AEMT), and Paramedic. Those seeking certification are expected to take an exam attempt within one (1) year of course completion and exhaust all attempts within two (2) years. The NREMT does not have a current cognitive examination specific to Prehospital Registered Nurse (PHRN), and Prehospital Physician Extender (PHPE) as they are not recognized at a national level. Therefore, these levels will be expected to successfully pass the NREMT Paramedic Assessment cognitive examination, via computer exam, as the written certification examination for PHRN and PHPE.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at timreitz@pa.gov

Resources:

2021 EMS Education Standards

https://www.ems.gov/assets/EMS_Education-Standards_2021_FNL.pdf

2019 National EMS Scope of Practice

https://www.ems.gov/assets/National_EMS_Scope_of_Practice_Model_2019.pdf

2023 Pennsylvania Scope of Practice

<https://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/Display/pabull?file=/secure/pabulletin/data/vol53/53-52/1799.html>

2023 NASEMSO SMC – AEMT

<https://nasemso.org/wp-content/uploads/NASEMSO-AEMT-SMC-Final-2023-06.pdf>

2023 CoAEMSP SMC – Paramedic

<https://coaemsp.org/resource-library#13>